

Persons—Caesar Augustus was emperor of Rome; Herod the Great, the first of the seven Herods mentioned in the New Testament, was king of Judea.

Between the Lessons

1 God the Word, John 1: 1-14. 2 St. Luke's Preface, Luke 1: 1-4. 3 An angel appears to Zacharias, Luke 1: 5-25. 4 An angel appears to Mary, 1: 26-38. 5 Mary visits Elizabeth, 1: 39-56. 6 Birth of John the Baptist, Luke 1: 57-80. 7 The two genealogies, Matt. 1: 1-7; Luke 3: 23-38.

The Lesson Text

1 Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be enrolled.

2 This was the first enrollment made when Quirinius was governor of Syria.

3 And all went to enroll themselves, every one to his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which was called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David.

5 To enroll himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child.

6 And it came to pass, while they were there, the days were fulfilled that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son; and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flocks.

9 And an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shown round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people.

11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this is the sign unto you; ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased.

15 And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, and the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found both Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in the manger.

Introduction

With this lesson we begin a study in the life of Christ to continue a year and a half. Nothing can certainly be more interesting than such a course, for like the Greeks of old men are still saying, "We would see Jesus." For, as much as we love to study about the heroes of faith in the Old or New Testament, still the life of Jesus has an interest about it greater than that of any other life lived on earth. The editors of this department in the EVANGELIST will make it their aim to present the lessons in such a way that when the series on the life of Christ is completed, those who shall have followed it closely, shall have become not only more familiar with that Divine man, but will also have a grasp of the relations of the various periods of his life and of some of the reasons

for his conduct.

Jesus was a historical personage and to understand him we must know the historical surroundings of his life, the customs, etc. We shall try to present his life in so simple a way that all readers of this paper can easily understand it. Also there will be some hints and helps for teachers especially.

The subject of our first lesson in this new year is the Birth of Jesus, as told by Luke.

History of the Time

The world was at peace, "but it was the peace of exhaustion," rather than the results of a desire to be at peace. Rome ruled Palestine, the land of the Jews and the emperor at Rome was Augustus Caesar.

Herod the Great was king of Judea under Caesar. The Jews now for some years had been expecting their Messiah to come. They did not know just what he would be or how he would appear. But they thought he would be a great king who would free them from the Romans, something as George Washington freed the colonies from England. They expected also that the Messiah, which means Christ, or the anointed one, to be born at Bethlehem the city of David, and that he would be a descendent of David.

The Lesson Story

And God had all things arranged to fulfill all the prophecies. Mary the mother of Jesus lived at Nazareth in Galilee. She was a descendant of David as was Joseph her husband. But how was Christ to be born at Bethlehem when his mother lived at Nazareth? God made even the great Caesar, emperor of Rome, serve his divine purpose, even as he had made Cyrus king of Persia long before his servant. And Caesar sent a decree that all the people of his empire should be enrolled in their native cities so that he could tax them. Now Joseph and Mary were originally natives of Bethlehem. So they went to Bethlehem to be enrolled. As they journeyed they arrived at Bethlehem late one evening. Others were there already on the same errand, and the inn, or hotel, was full. But the place where they kept the camels, donkeys, etc., was not full, and as it was the only place left for them they made themselves as comfortable as possible in this stable. And that night a most wonderful thing happened—Jesus the Messiah of the Jews was born as a little babe to Mary. And the only place she had to lay him was upon the straw in the manger. But greatness does not need a palace for its birthplace. Yet it shows the humble birth of our Savior and should teach us that we should not despise anyone just because their birth is humble, or lowly. While this was taking place in the stable at Bethlehem, out on the hill side somewhere about Bethlehem the shepherds who were keeping their flocks all night were startled by a wonderful thing. All at once a glorious light shone around them, turning the night into day. And the angel of the Lord, that mysterious being of whom we read so often in God's word, appeared to

them and said, "Be not afraid, for I come to bring you good tidings of great joy, which all people shall share. And the cause of this joy is that tonight in Bethlehem, is born a Savior who is the Lord Messiah. And as a sign that what I tell you is true and a means by which you may find this child. I will tell you that that is the child which you shall find wrapped in long swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And all at once there was with the angel a large number of the angels of heaven who sang this song, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace and good will among men in whom God is well pleased." After the song the heavenly singers went away into heaven and the wonder stricken shepherds hastily leaving their flocks went to Bethlehem sought the village tavern stable and there found the babe as had been told them lying in the manger.

Lesson Applied

1. Even those who know not God are made the unconscious servants of His will.
2. God uses the kings and rulers and governments of this world to forward his purposes.
3. There are no accidents in God's providences all is provided for.
4. Royalty is oftener born in a stable than in a palace. True royalty lies in character rather than in external trappings.
5. God put a bond of sympathy into this world for the poor and outcast by the birth of his son.
6. God appears to men in blessed revelation in the common duties of life.
7. Men are afraid of God's messengers. Don't pray for the Holy Spirit to fill the house, if it would scare you should God hear your prayer.
8. God always fulfils his promises, tho we wait long for it.
9. The shepherds proved Gods promises. We shall do well to prove them also.

Communion Notice

The Star Brethren church of Mulvane, Kansas, will hold their quarterly communion service on Saturday evening, Jan. 6, 1900. A cordial invitation is extended to all.

L. G. WOOD.

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